

The street

Jaán Valsiner

I begin with a deceptively simple question—what is a street?—and end up with the whole universe of human culturally organized life. What looks as if it is nothing—the «in-between space»—becomes the arena that is the missing link—a stage—in the relation between a person and a society.

From a purely formal standpoint, the street is an aperture—a kind of «empty space» between human-made structures. In the most general sense, the street is made by breaking the homogeneity of the substance to include a break (Figure 1). The substance in which the break is made is human-made—a naturally occurring break at the drifting of continents, for instance, does not create a street (Saramago, 1995), but a catastrophic break. In contrast, a street as an aperture unites the parts of the whole «in between» of which it is created. It is a link, the bond between the known and the unknown, the familiar and the surprising.

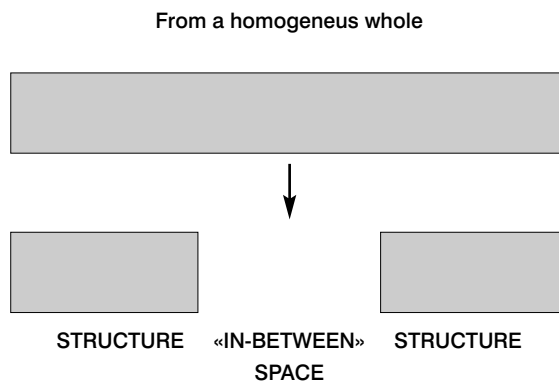


Figure 1. *Street as an aperture*

Street is created within the surrounding of archi-textured environments—village, or town. It is a trail –or a path– in a human-made, urban environment. It is a part of the whole of human cultural transformation of the natural environments. As part of the culturally textured environment, the street as «empty space» that is left for passageways «in between» of building structures is not «empty». It is structured culturally for both of its psychological functions—moving into the place already known, and moving out of the known—the unpredictable— to the increasingly unknown (Figure 2).

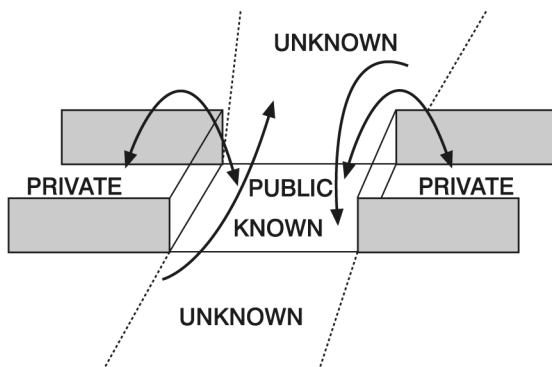


Figure 2. *Two cultural-psychological dialogues afforded by the streets*
 PRIVATE <> PUBLIC
 and KNOWN <> UNKNOWN
 and HEIMWEH <> FERNWEH

The street affords moving— in two directions— onto it, and through it. Both directions entail novelty for the person(s) on the move—yet of different kinds. Passing onto the street from its formative boundary structures entails moving onto a known arena where new social events may take place. These can be traumatic, dramatic, violent, or about to become so (e.g., Figure 3) or merely maintaining the relative ordinariness of everyday life—of social encounters (Figure 4). In the middle of a very ordinary street scene an extraordinary experience may take place. Social dramas that vary between all extremes can be played out on the familiar public



Figure 3. *A street as a public arena for a social event*

A. *Impeding confrontation of social forces* B. *After a confrontation – bomb crater in a street*

domain of the street. The street is the place for private negotiation of the public domain— that takes place within that public domain. The person moving through a street is an inevitable peripheral participant of all that is happening in the street.

Peripheral participation in social events is the main process of human social development. It provides the input flow for internalization/externalization processes that continue within the person long after the experienced episode is over. Thus, the accessibility of persons to street scenes is likewise used to guide the peripheral participation of people in the street crowds towards different social goals, and guard them away from others. In that *guarded and guided participation* (VALSINER, 2000, chapter 12) the street is also the venue for public negotiation of the private domains.

The street as a part of the whole— constructed urban structure. The street is a result of the move of human habitats from sedentary rural settlements to urban contexts. It is a component of the wider semiotic structure of the urban space (Boudon, 1986; Fauque, 1986; Lagopoulous, 1975)—yet one that is usually under-emphasized in favor of other structural parts (buildings, gates, monuments, etc.).

All urban worlds are culturally constructed spaces. Such urban space ... has a history. It not only signifies some meaning, but also represents the end result of an economic and political process through which one among many meanings and conflicting uses has acquired hegemony. As a space it then serves to reproduce that particular interest and use against other contending ones. Oppositional signs exist not only as alternative uses or facades which were

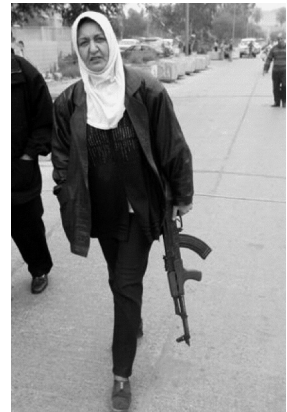


Figure 4. *Ordinary activities in the street*
 A. *A market street (Seoul)*
 B. *Encountering strangers*

repressed during the hegemonic process. Urban space, and, in fact, any space belonging to a stratified society with an oppositional social structure, represents the material manifestation of dominant interests orchestrating social organization along with the traces of historical challenges to this hegemony. The surface naturalness of appearance and its taken-for-granted quality provides false testimony for what is a constant, often contentious process of group struggle over the control of spaces. (GOTTDIENER, 1986a, pp. 214-215)

There is hardly a better testimony for the tension of the history of various ideological “voices” than the Gedächtniskirche in Berlin. As a memory device, a war-damaged church is left relatively un-repaired in the middle of newly re-built city, and turned into a museum. Yet it develops new uses—as a place for contemporary bill-board advertising.

City environment as a whole is heterogeneous. Increased urbanization of human life environments leads to hyper-differentiation of the loci of human development. Such plurality creates both the freedom and the regulatory role of the city. As Dietmar Görlitz has observed,

There is probably no entity in the world in which there gather as many active, indifferent strangers intertwined in a wider variety of orthogeneses and observing each other at a wider range of angles—from the street to the top of high-rises—as in the large city, with the virtual presence of others behind innumerable windows, in a maze of constantly shifting configurations that foreshortens what is given to an often fleeting, always selective, visual, perceptual impression...

... city life and the city as an alternative way of living *explodes the simple, internally directed centering of the traditional orthogenetic principle into many scattered, colliding, mutually supporting or restricting orthogeneses of mutually indifferent, unconcerned, or even mutually committed partners.* (GÖRLITZ, 1998, p. 309, added emphasis)

By such multiplicity of cultural direction of human lives, the urban environments guarantee its dwellers the episodic nature of the social regulation of their conduct. The agents of such regulation vary from one setting to another, their goals may vary from one time to another, providing the person with the «freedom to migrate» between the settings. Such migration requires passageways—streets—which are of various functional kinds (no-through, through, central streets—BRENDLE, 1993, pp. 214-215). The different functions of the streets as the connecting tissue of the city depend on the whole of the city.

The spatial and temporal functional structure of the city structure—including that of the street—fits the general realm of the theory of bounded indeterminacy (VALSINER, 1987) and constitutes a cultural arena for directing the streams of sub-conscious, conscious, and hyper-conscious (VALSINER, 2001, 2003) relating of the person with the social world. The notion of

constant evaluation of the beauty or dangerousness of a particular environmental setting is an affective process that entails feed-forward from established hyper-generalized semiotic fields into the immediate perceptual appraisal of the situation. A person who turns the corner in a mediaeval city, and exclaims “how beautiful!” when confronted with an old, run-down, dirty old house is affectively pre-oriented by aesthetic feeling fields to “find” beauty in the old, rather than in the cleaned-up versions of the old.¹

The street in relation to the home. Human beings create over-generalized feeling fields to capture the holistic meaning of a place—a certain dwelling is not just one’s place of living, but a home. That feeling can be created in relation to many places—a house, an office, a car, a street. It is the personal-cultural hyper-generalization. Given the territoriality and protective functions of human ordinary live arrangements, the home is—more often than not—a dwelling.

The street is the façade side of the built environments— where many social events may take place. It creates the oppositional contrast with the back side—back yard— of the houses— usually impassable apertures that are often hidden from public view by fences and walls. As the place for the departure from the private territory of the person (domestic space) to enter into the public arena, the street is a boundary space. It is a liminal place for transitory identity processes of human beings to be acted out. This makes the street into the key for integration of the psyche’s of people in (and around) the street. It is a boundary zone—a case of liminality both in space and in the minds. Yet,

...liminality is not only transition but also potentiality, not only “going to be” but also “what may be,” a formulable domain in which all that is not manifest in the normal day-to-day operation of social structures (whether on account of social repression or because it is rendered cognitively “invisible” by prestigious paradigmatic denial) can be studied objectively, despite the often bizarre and metaphorical character of its contents. (TURNER & TURNER, 1978, p. 3)

The study of streets goes through people—and the temporary appearance of people in the street makes such study possible. The street is a stage—and all people who participate in its spectacle are actors on that stage. Psychologically, encountering that stage entails the transition to settings of public exposure of the self, uncertainty of experiences, use of cognitive tools to anticipate these experiences, dialogical negotiation of the personal self with public social order, and seeking of new thrills. The street is simultaneously dangerous and alluring, uniting and separating, free and un-free. It is a place that supports the tension between two major cultural-psychological processes outlined by Ernst Boesch (1997, pp. 79-105)—Fernweh (striving towards the far-off, foreign, unknown, and thrilling) and Heimweh (striving towards the known, familiar, safe). This dynamics of “otherness” is the universal of all

psychological functioning of human beings (Simão, 2003)—human beings are in constant movement at the boundaries of the known and the unknown.

It is precisely at the near-familiar world where the non-familiar appears in its biggest contrast—and the street is the usual arena for that in our urbanized world. Historically, it is a theatrical arena of sociological importance, as it makes possible for

...workers, poor people, and racial minorities to broadcast messages to large numbers of people, which partly explains the vibrant popularity of parades of all kinds and the variety of autonomously produced mobile performances. The street was shared more equally than any other space. A decision to strike, a meeting's outcome, or a festive gathering could move quickly from an assembly into a marching line that conveyed a message to coworkers, neighbors, and the city at large. (DAVIS, 1986, p. 33)

The relativity of the meanings HOME<>STREET is testable by the meaning reversal: the street may become the home, and the previous home—an external environment that is liminal in the same way as the street is in its usual function. The position of the street in that role is relative—as the predicament of turning the street into the home indicates (APTEKAR, 1988; GÜNTHER & GÜNTHER, 1998, Pandey, 1991). Such home-in-the-street may be vulnerable by intrusions from outsiders (raids by police and other local gangs, etc.) and develops its own meaning system that is focused on the concurrent survival (FLEISHER, 1995, pp. 212-215).

If the street becomes home—the buildings surrounding it may become challenges of novelty—the homeless street children have no access to the homes of the sedentary house-dwellers. More importantly—the sedentary environments that are set up for «rehabilitation» of the street children often need to operate with the “open barrier” policy—the homeless can come and go as they wish. In the realm of meaning reversals, the entrance to dwellings (shelters) is functionally free in ways similar as the stepping onto a street is in the regular meaning setup. The culture of the street is apprehensive about being kidnapped into a dwelling, in ways similar to house inhabitants are apprehensive about being kidnapped in the street.

The street as the beginning place for a journey elsewhere. The street is the arena for the beginning of exploration of the wide world beyond the horizons of the known social world—to somewhere else. It is also the place of arrival—in a previously unknown urban environment.

In its usual role, the street the place for movement—a means to getting new experiences. It is the place for the action for meaningful alterity—expanding from the “secure base” of the home, the street is the place to move towards events that are new—and yet close to the old.² The orientation towards away from oneself is already encoded at the perceptual level—the



Figure 5.

A Road that Suggest There is Somewhere Else (Via Traiana, Italy-Esch, 1997, p.55)

Figure 6.
The street as the beginning of a journey
Gustave Courbet (1819-1877)
Village exit in winter



linear perspective of purely graphic kind creates for human visual system the image of depth of the road to far away. When further supported by traces of human action in the making of a trail, pathway or a road (Figure 5) suggests the socially guided movement towards somewhere else («there is a road to somewhere») as well as caution about using it («who knows where it may lead ?!»). The beginning of such movement

towards the unknown is both alluring and disquieting. Such uncertainty is bounded by the goals-oriented movement of people. Movement is the core of being human—as it is the basis for all actions that modify the environment. Human life is a kind of a journey—a «tour» through one's own self-constructed life space. In this respect, «tour-ism» is rooted in the very essence of being human (MASATOSHI, 1995).



Figure 7. *The road proceeds-beyond the asphalt*

The journey –for pleasure, business, or pilgrimage– is a way of constructing one's self. It has been collective-culturally promoted in many versions— ranging from pilgrimage (TURNER & TURNER, 1978) to tourism (GILLESPIE, 2005 in press). While on the journey, the cultural structuring of the street becomes a road (Figure 6), and the road may change its human-made texture from asphalt to gravel (Figure 7), or seem to come to its end in a place of no human action

traces—the «dead end». Yet—most likely— it can lead to another culturally structured place—a town (Figure 8) where – in totally unfamiliar context—public events are taking place in the street. These events are new—while being familiar by some similarity. And they may be precisely those of the arrival of the visitor—friend or foe (Figure 9). All of these distinctions are culturally made up by the actors in the scene of the journey and at its destination.

The human psyche as SMS. More importantly, the movement towards elsewhere is a universal human psychological process—it need not take spatial and temporal forms of prolonged public activity. Listening to music foreign to one’s home (ABBEY & DAVIS, 2003), daydreaming (Pereira, 2004) or improvisation on the stage of theatres and other settings (SAWYER, 2003), or merely doing something usual in an unusual way— are all characteristics of the Strivingly Moving Self (SMS). Given the movement, and the inevitability of the irreversibility of time in human experience (VALSINER, 1998), the SMS is necessarily dialogical in its nature. Theories of dialogical self (HERMANS, 2002; HERMANS & HERMANS-JANSEN, 2003; MARKOVÁ, 1990) are built upon the axiom of doubleness of the singular events (event A consists of opposition A and non-A). Any action is the opposition between tendencies towards acting and non-acting.

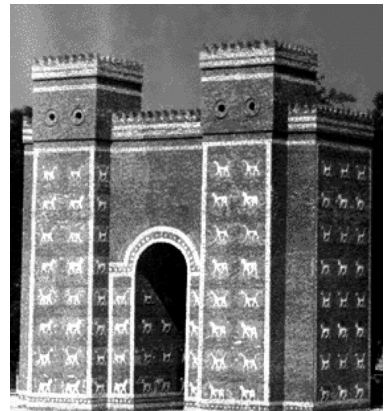


Figure 8. *Entrance to a new place*



Figure 9. *Street and the arrival of the traveler Franz Pforr (1788-1812) – The entrance of Rudolf von Habsburg into Basel, 1808/1810*

Journeys elsewhere are thus –in a general sense– the universal psychological core of human psychological lives. The human-built environments –houses, villages, roads, automobiles, towns, tourist resorts, aircrafts and space rockets– are all both results of some first journey beyond the known (for the first constructors of the cultural tools), and, secondly, established tools for making further journeys possible. For the purposes of SMS, the street is a culturally constructed tool for both the personal and collective cultures (VALSINER, 2000).

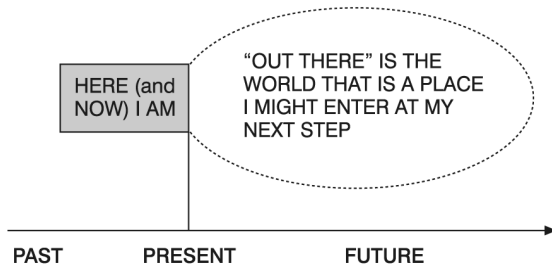


Figure 10. *Human psyche facing the future*

As all personal-cultural constructions, the personal meaning of the street is based on the ego-centered distinction that operates in human irreversibility of life-time (Figure 10). The ego-centered point is inevitably the anchor point for any social positioning of a person in environment and in communication efforts (Bühler, 1990). It is in the relation to that ego-center at the given space-time location that any next movement takes place. So, the

person steps out into the street—or into a building from the street, crossing the symbolic boundary set up for the PUBLIC <> PRIVATE opposition embodied in the archi-texture.

The collective-cultural organization of the street makes it the major arena for encounters of personal worlds with experiences that transcend the immediate dialogue of the PUBLIC <> PRIVATE kind. These macro-social experiences make the use of the affordance of the street to subject persons in it to new social construction of experience. Some of these are closely linked to public life-cycle ritual observances—wedding or funeral processions that move between the private spaces to the public ritual grounds (cf. CHAUDHARY, 2004, pp. 16-18). It is here that the personal and collective cultures encounter one another—and enter into various kinds of dialogues.

Streets as territories. In terms of environmental psychology, streets are territories imbued with human control and identification functions. The distinction of primary (home), secondary, and public territories sets up a social psychological map for space. Within that, streets are secondary territories—in contrast to primary ones:

Primary territories such as homes are occupied for the longest periods, are psychologically central in meaning and significance, are well marked, under their owners' control, and are likely to be defended against intrusions. Public territories are areas that people can occupy as long as they follow norms and rules. Public territories have little psychological centrality, they are usually occupied for only a short time, control is limited, they are not marked in any permanent way, people exercise little control over their use, and intrusions are not always responded to with vigorous defense. Public plazas, shopping areas, and outdoor settings such as beaches and woods are typical public territories...

Secondary territories are between those two poles... it is more accurate to describe them as a range of possible forms or a continuum between primary and public territories rather than

a fixed point between the two. Some secondary territories for some groups are almost as meaningful and tightly held as a primary territory, whereas some secondary territories have less meaning, are shared readily with other groups, and are closer to public territory. (WERNER & ALTMAN, 1998, p. 131)

The subjective identification of the street in which one's home is as «my street», and the vigilance in the form of "neighborhood watch" indicates the extension of the primary territory to appropriate the secondary one—the street. In a similar way, neighborhood gangs may fight for the territory of a particular street with some other gangs. Yet such appropriation can be—and often is—contested, even in the mediaeval world (REYERSON, 1997). The extent to which street can be socially marked as someone's (or some enterprise's) territory may lead to legal disputes involving minimum space units at maximum fierceness of the fight.

Culture on the road to creating streets— and of its enacted dramas. Probably the first street was any aperture human beings—protohominids and all of us after them—made into the impassable forest. Making a trail entailed doing violence to the nature—for the purposes of making the nature fit with human goals-oriented actions. Human history is the process of domestication of the landscape (MATHER, 2003)—by making trails and roads, signifying different parts of the natural environment by attributing meanings-filled character to the selected places. Burial grounds or deep forests are not merely unknown physical locations of objective dangers from the predators (wild animals), but are turned into places of symbolic dangers always possible because of the wandering malevolent spirits and nasty ghosts.

In the urban environment, streets continue to be indicators of human cultural capacities of creating future objectives, and means of reaching these objectives. The trail, country road, or city street is a means to some end—of human movement of bodies, goods, and creating distinctions between different parts of the environment. The exit from a village is an opening to somewhere else—for a person who leaves the village and arrives somewhere else.

Cultural psychology looks at the meaning construction processes linked with a place. From that standpoint, the street becomes an arena—a stage—through which different non-local social experiences are brought in as temporary, passing-through the street, performances. Thus, military parades, street fairs, ceremonies of public execution, advertising, or religious processions, political demonstrations, etc. may all become parts of the system of importing extra-local value- and meaning systems into the local streets. All street events render themselves to unexpected scenarios— there may be accidents, mishaps, and dramas of improvisational actions by beggars, pickpockets, prostitutes, and politicians. The local people only need to be drawn by their curiosity for the novel events into the streets—and the passing processions bring the «symbolic goods» to the massive audiences. Who controls the streets controls the crowds—and crowds play a significant role in any transformation of the given state of the society.



Figure 11. *Sedan chairs in a Chinese city, beginning of the 20th Century* (WANG, 2003, p. 194 and p. 196).
 A. *Sedan chairs and carriers* (left).
 B. *A dog knocks down a woman's sedan chair* (right).

The entrance to a town may mean entrance into new social roles—of the conqueror, or craftsman, or a homeless urban vagabond. Each of these social roles has established their own ways of movement in the town streets—by foot, by bicycle, by car, by sedan chair, by rickshaw, by a horse, by limousine— or by a tank. The specific social role/power distancing is encoded into the means of in-street movement—from strolling the streets by foot to the motorcade of VIP limousines of lowered blinds and with motorcycle escorts. Social class differentiation is visibly displayed in the ways of transportation through the streets. In 1916 the Chinese city of Chengdu was described as

... full of officials, both in and out of office, who move about the streets in sedan chairs carried at a great speed. The chairs were peculiar in that the long poles were curved, with the body of the chair resting on the top of the curve. When carried, such a chair is held well above the heads of the crowd. Sedan-chair carriers spoke in jargon, which helped to maintain working harmony and also alleviated boredom. The rear carriers listened to the front men's rhymed couplets that warned of the dangers ahead, and the rear men acknowledged that they understood. (WANG, 2003, pp. 193-194)

The dangers of moving such large team-carried vehicles safely through crowded city streets were formidable, and accidents with sedan chairs common (Figure 11). In our contemporary urban world, the sedan chair is conveniently replaced by extra-long chauffeur-driven limousines that demonstrate their power by making wide turns in small streets and demanding double parking space in front of fancy buildings.

Barriers, power relations, and affect. The ways in which people move in the street exemplifies the existing social roles by way of dramatizing those in the public arena. Different means of moving around in the street indicate the inherent ambivalence in social power relations. Thus, in the middle of 1940s Fez, in a retrospect of a young girl,

Most people walked on foot in the Medina. Father and Uncle had their mules, but poor people like Ahmed had only donkeys, and children and women had to walk. The French were afraid to walk. They were always in their cars. Even the soldiers would stay in their cars when things got bad. Their fear was quite an amazing thing to us children, because we saw that grownups could be as afraid as we could. And these grownups were on the outside, supposedly free. The powerful ones who had created the frontier were also the fearful ones. The Ville Nouvelle was like their harem; just like women, they could not walk freely in the Medina. (MERNISSI. 1994, p. 23)

All peripheral participants in the street events are related by mutuality of complementary social roles. Children—usually at the lowest level of social power (therefore having access across semiotic boundaries of social relations) are at the same time high in the importance for future – and hence under constant surveillance for where they have access. Social importance of a social group leads to segregation of the class by way of symbolic (and often architectural) boundaries. Such barriers are created both in the physical set-up of a street—by parked cars, barriers, stalls—as well as by internalized meaningful fears about the public domains (e.g., potential of meeting drug addicts, kidnappers, social deviants, muggers, etc.—Carbonara-Moscatti, 1985, p. 122). The ambivalence of the personages in the street is an inevitable side of its role as a secondary territory.

The collective-cultural meaning systems built around street have been ambivalent. In the Western histories of everyday life it is possible to trace the opening of the urban world out of the home territory for the persons who have been most constrained by home confinement—women and children. The passage from private to public territories (and vice versa) is regularly guarded by social limits, access rules, and limitations—the history of locks, sentinels, and passwords is an ever-living testimony of the human tendency to build barriers to limit their own freedom of action. When 1880s London began to provide independent activity contexts for affluent women out of their homes, the meaning systems accompanied such adjustment by making trips to the city flavored as «being at home». The feeling of safety

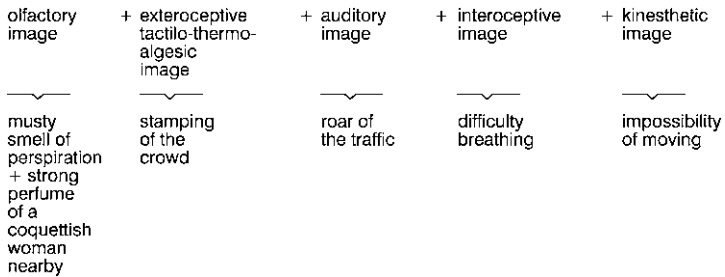


Figure 12. *Waiting for a bus: holistic signification of the context (Fauque, 1986, p. 147)*

was projected outwards from the confines of the home base to the uncertain public environment—now including lures like shop windows. Yet the presence of women in the streets remained ambivalent—the women in the streets were either “fallen” (to be “rescued” or «virtuous»— a dichotomy difficult to detect in the ever-creative world of human presentation;

Faded looks, painted faces, gaudy, seedy clothes supposedly marked off the streetwalkers from respectable ladies, dressed in muted colors, tailor-made jackets and waistcoats. Nonetheless, in the mid- and late-Victorian period, even as police cleared the streets and theaters of prostitutes to make room for the respectable women, these two categories constantly overlapped and intersected at the juncture of commerce and femininity. Although Victorians expected the vices and virtues of femininity «written on the body,» confusions over identity frequently occurred. In the elegant shopping districts around Regent Street, prostitutes, dressed in “meretricious finery,” could and did pass as respectable, while virtuous ladies wandering through streets, “window glazing at their leisure” often found themselves accosted as streetwalkers. (WALKOWITZ, 1992, p. 50)

The uncertainty of identity in the street was general— to differentiate the intentions of the particular stranger who is encountered in close proximity is no easy task. The ambivalence about the public domain continues to our present day, and finds its expression in instructions to children about encountering strangers. Neither is that uncertainty new—already in the Ancient Roman cities the acts of sexually-based overtures were sufficiently prominent to warrant special legal actions against them.³

The differentiation of private/public transportation means has historically led to the establishment of public transportation—by taxi, bus, trolley-bus, tram, subway, etc. Here the physical distances between bodies are temporarily diminished and new proxemic structures for public transportation set into place. Conduct in the public entails whole bodily experience. FAUQUE (1986, pp. 146-147) has analyzed the signifiers involved in a simple act of waiting for

a bus in a crowded street (Figure 12). The redundant and unified total bodily experience —of smelly, warm, noisy, and kinaesthetic images—is the actual meaning of the experience in the socially set conditions for collective movement through the city.⁴

The liminal nature of the street as a place leads to ambivalence of tolerance and intolerance towards different social role bearers in the setting. Certain social groups may be barely tolerated in the streets —beggars, thieves, and streetwalking prostitutes have repeatedly been targets of eradication efforts in city streets by the social powers that govern these. Yet their presence in the streets supports the social organization of the given society as counter-roles (RAMAJUNAN, 1991) and anti-languages (HALLIDAY, 1976) do. In an integrated structure, the dominant parts depend upon the sub-dominant ones (and vice versa).



Figure 13. *A beggar in a city*

Improvisational actors in the street: beggars dramatizing conventional values. The social role of beggars has been prominent in the history of most

countries of the World. Their social roles are inherently ambivalent—beggars are a class not easily tolerated in the public domain of streets,⁵ yet their being there actually supports the social order that marginalizes them. The view of a beggar in a street would evoke duty or sympathy in the potential donors to give alms—hence the very act of successful begging depends upon the complementarity of the roles of the donor and beggar, the giver and the receiver. By begging, the beggars made it possible to fortify the social class difference of the givers from the marginal social strata—the act of non-reciprocated giving is often an act of distancing.⁶ Yet beggars would form their own social groups—regulating their activities, and negotiating their roles in the class structure of the town.

Begging is a symbolically dramatized act—hence the theater of the street is the fitting venue for its accomplishment (Figure 13). It builds upon the illusory intersubjectivity (Rommetveit, 1992) between the beggar and the donor—under the setting of the stage by the beggar. The targeted donor may understand the dramatized nature of the beggar’s act very well—and still succumb to the sequence of psychological processes that leads to the making of the donation.⁷ In the Chinese city of Chengdu,

One beggar, surnamed Li, lived with a group of fellow indigents by the Imperial River. Being young and healthy, but shabbily dressed, he received little sympathy from pedestrians or from waiters in restaurants, who considered him to be lazy. One day, an old beggar gave him advice: «There is a blind, old woman living along in the corner of Horse Riding Street. Why don't you carry her on your back and claim that she is your mother? You will become a 'dutiful son' while begging with 'your mother.' I guarantee you will get enough to eat if you do so.» Li «saw the light» and did what the old beggar suggested. From that moment on, the «dutiful son» carrying his blind, old «mother» on his back was a familiar sight in Chengdu. On the crowded street corners, he would seat his «mother» on a pedestal and feed her leftovers. His «filial piety» gained such immediate renown that people brought food and money just to get a glimpse of the «Dutiful Son Li» who «begged to feed his mother.» (WANG, 2003, pp. 100-101)

The value on which the sympathy was based here—filial piety—may be specifically powerful in the Oriental societies, but the general principle of relying upon a basic value that upholds the illusory intersubjectivity is universal. In the Occidental world, instead of {borrowing a mother» the beggar may “borrow a child” for similar purposes.

The reverse social role of the beggars (who want alms) is that of various kinds of street sellers— mobile («push-cart» sellers, newspaper sellers) or stationary («kiosk» or «stand» based sellers). Competition between the on the street and at the street (shops in the buildings aligning the street) sellers may become dramatic (e.g., see the description of «push-cart evil» in New York City—Bluestone, 1991). The legal issues of licensing the places for street vendors are a reflection of the tensions in the public space.

Of course the transfer of property in the street can occur also in ways different from giving/getting or alms and selling/buying of goods. The dangerousness of the public domain is exemplified by the unintentional loss of property (to thieves and pickpockets), or of lives (military and other violent actions).

Social regulation of public movement. The space in-between buildings within a town is limited, leading to high concentration of the people within small spaces. Implications are profound—epidemics have endangered the lives of city-dwellers in the history of towns, towns have been the places for social power struggles, etc. The crowdedness of the urban streets facilitates the turning of these places into theatrical arenas for the activities of all the social role-players and events described above—and more.

Crowds in closed spaces are dangerous—accidents and disorder can evolve. It is not unusual that whenever the public order in a town is altered, looting of the valuable targets in the street may occur. Hence the social public order is regulated by social roles of power—traffic police and their volunteer helpers, signs that regulate the movement of people across, and along,



A. *Passageways for all (Melbourne's Victoria Parade)* B. *Passageways compressed (Kyoto)*

Figure 14. *City street functionally divided*

the street. The street can allow for separation of different kinds of passing-through traffic (parked cars, pedestrians, bicycle, car, tram—Fig. 14.A.) or marked separation of pedestrians from the rest of the traffic (Fig.14.B.), with corresponding locations for crossing the multi-flow traffic of the street (traffic lights, pedestrian crossings). Or—the different passing-through flows may be mixed (Fig.15). The role of private world in structuring public space is at its maximum here (e.g., any social event within the houses on either side of the narrow street can block the through-traffic), whereas on the wide public multi-flow thoroughfares of a city (Fig. 14.A.) such informal appropriation of the public domain would be contested by the social institution. In our days, municipalities grant permits for the use of city streets for demonstrations, close streets down for cars, etc. The addition of new forms of traffic to the existing organization of through-passing flows has been documented to evoke social tensions (e.g., planning railroad tracks onto town streets in U.S.—STOWELL, 1995). Similar tensions existed already in ancient Rome— cart trips in the darkness would be dangerous (so that advice was given «to send a slave ahead on with a torch or lantern»— JACOBELLI, 2003, p. 68). The surface of ancient roads (Figure 16) did not facilitate a smooth ride in wheel carts even during daytime—so the invention of the sedan chair was a comforting solution to the higher social classes.



Figure 15. *Street in Tui, Galicia*
Unstructured home/street transition:
no separation
on the onto-the-street and through-the-
street public movement (see arrows)



Figure 16. Pompeii streets (from Jacobelli, 2003, p. 63 and 69)

A. Main street

B. Stepping stones to cross the street

The cultural structuring of public movement into and through the street can be viewed within the purely practical set of issues, the question of traffic safety has led to the various estimations of what kinds of speed limits to set up for the moving traffic, and how to regulate speed limits for cars and access to cars to different kinds of streets (FLADE, 1993, WECKWERTH, 1993). Mostly the practicality of street regulation is played out on concerns about children's safety in the streets (TORELL & BIEL, 1985; WERNER & ALTMANN, 1998) or on the basis of affordances of the space and moving traffic (HEINE & GUSKI, 1998, pp. 552-554)



Figure 17. Cultural regulation of safety and institutional dependency in the street – helping children cross the street (Seoul, Korea)

The needs of children crossing city streets (Figure 17) are an interesting case—without doubt their safety on the way to and back from school is of high relevance for social regulation. A uniformed crossing guard uses a flag to guarantee the safety of children back coming from school. The relation SELF <> TRAFFIC for the children is firmly appropriated by the

helper and the social institution she represents. The children in the city—who are faced with street traffic on all occasions they are in the streets—have that special occasion of return from school symbolically marked by the protecting institution in the form of the actions of uniformed crossing guards.

Conclusions: Cultural organization of urban worlds

The street is a central place for human development—one that has largely been overlooked both by psychologists (who have stigmatized it as potentially dangerous or corrupting) and by architects (whose main concern is naturally with the buildings that end up creating the street). The street is a complex object of study for psychologists—while for architects it constitutes an object of creative construction (GÖRLITZ *et al*, 1993, 1998). It can take into account the symbolically encoded needs of one or another part of the population—children («child-friendly city planning»—BEYER-JAENICHEN, 1993), women, the elderly, or any other social group.

Psychologically, the street has the enigma of constant departures and returns, and is thus the external projected construction of human internalized realities. Its nature has changed with human history—starting from repeatedly usable trails in the forest, and continuing with the fixation of access roads in sedentary settlements, the roads/streets system became functional in towns. Towns develop their own ways into cities, and larger urban fields, leading to further re-organization of the urban symbolic space.

Such re-organization, however, may lead to functional displacement of the loci where exploration of the non-home world takes place. Encounters in the street may become replaced by those on the internet—with similar ambiguities of the identity and dramatized persuasion efforts of any kind. Or—the road to the unknown town in our highly urbanized environments may bring us to face the challenges of another analogue of a city—the shopping mall:

... malls have ugly, blank walls on their outsides, as all activities are turned inward. In fact from the parking lots most malls look like concrete bunkers with an occasional logo of a department store serving as the only break in a monolithic pattern of bricks and steel. The purpose of this design is to prevent loitering outside the mall and quicken the pace with which shoppers leave their cars. ... this denial of the street outside can be called «introversion,» because the mall design captures the self-enclosed, protectionist atmosphere of the Medieval Castle. Thus, while the world outside may be filled with vagaries of urban life in a society characterized by conflict and social stratification, the experience within the mall is sheltered within blank fortresslike walls and by the auspices of its feudal-like proprietor, the mall management. (GOTTDIENER, 1986b, p. 296)

Not surprisingly, the social meeting place of the youth in the sub-urbanized urban environments move to the malls—away from near-home streets, and from parental supervision. The functions of the street can be transposed to many locations given the changes in urban mobility patterns. Yet the actors remain in movement—wherever our roads and streets are set up, we contemplate proceeding along them, act as peripheral participants in the social theatre, and often find ourselves avoiding the journeys the alluring end of the road may suggest. We are all street-children, after all—our streets may be located in different places in the environments, and in our minds.

Notes

1. A test case of this claim is a look at a statue—before it is cleaned from the “dirt” it has gathered over centuries, and after. The “feeling of historical authenticity” may be lost in the latter case—while in most other encounters with “dirt” in everyday lives we would not apply that hyper-generalized affective orientation to ordinary objects, but clean or discard them when they become “dirty”.
2. An interesting new transformation of the home/street distinction occurs in large urban areas where people live in high rise buildings—the “street” (as non-home) in these buildings begins from the elevator—a kind of vertical street. The person exits from home (apartment) onto that street (elevator), encounters similar persons in transit—and in a state of high crowding. The result is a differential organization of the freedom of entrance of children to the actual (ground level) street—parents of children at upper floors restrict their children’s activities more than those living on lower floors (BJÖRKLID, 1985, p. 95). The distance from home becomes three-dimensional in case of high-rises.
3. Three acts of trespass upon the respectable women —mater familias—were specified as punishable: adsecratio (following the object of courtship in silence but with insistence) apellatio (uttering flattery and persuasive comments) and abductio (removal of the guardian escort who accompanied the woman)—JACOBELLI, 2003, pp. 66-67. These measures were set up to protect not all women, but women in specific social roles—operating as social distinction devices.
4. The flow of people within the city—through streets, but on regular movement patterns within the city as a whole, is a mechanism for social regulation of the crowds.
5. For instance, in Chengdu beggars were often forbidden to live inside the city, and had to migrate to town every morning when the town’s gates were opened, and out by the evening—WANG, 2003, p. 198). The cultural construction of the social role of beggars was intense in late 19th century United States (STANLEY, 1992)
6. It would be of interest to consider the practices of international aid given by countries of foundations from the “rich nations” to those of “poor nations” from this angle.
7. This is also visible in contemporary mass media based acts of begging—solicitation of donations for social and other causes (“fund raising”).

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